

AMERICAN
BACH
SOLOISTS



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support materials for our recording of

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH
CANTATAS FROM MÜHLHAUSEN & WEIMAR

Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen, BWV 12
Gleichwie der Regen und Schnee vom Himmel fällt, BWV 18
Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland, BWV 61

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PROGRAM NOTES

by John Butt

Gleichwie der Regen und Schnee vom Himmel fällt, BWV 18
Cantata for Sexagesimae

The most influential cleric in the movement to integrate the modern operatic forms of *da capo* aria and recitative into the church cantata was Erdmann Neumeister. His poetic text on the parable of the sower does not accommodate the *da capo* aria but allows for some extremely dramatic recitative. Bach's cantata was certainly written by 1715, although some scholars have suggested it could have been written earlier, even before the time of regular cantata production at Weimar. It begins with a dramatic *sinfonia* (a loose *chaconne*, based on an extremely vivid theme), which, although not strictly necessary from a textual point of view, prevents the opening recitative from sounding too bare, and also prepares for the affect of the opening words. The centerpiece of the work is the long recitative interspersed with four sections of the Litany. The general theme—like that of the cantata as a whole—is the plea that the Word of God may fall on fertile ground and that Satan may not rob us of the Word and its benefits. Much of the text is surprisingly truculent, particularly the reference in the Litany to the “cruel murder and oppression of the Turks and Pope.” It is interesting that later texts are not generally so vitriolic about the Roman Church and, indeed, Bach's own connections with Dresden suggest that he was not averse to contact with Catholics (Leipzig was, after all, part of Saxony, the Elector of which had been Catholic since the 1690s). Much probably lay in the changing political relationship between the two principal denominations of Germany and the particular stance of Bach's various employers and environments.

Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen, BWV 12
Cantata for Jubilate

Although Bach left Mühlhausen largely because of the anti-musical sentiment of the church authorities, his post as organist to the Weimar court (1708) did not immediately enable him to compose concerted church music. Only after he was offered a position elsewhere and subsequently promoted to “Concertmaster” was he offered the opportunity to write cantatas, at the rate of one every four weeks or so. His second cantata produced under this arrangement was “*Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen*,” for April 22, 1714. Like all his works written for specific Sundays of the church year,

the text (by Weimar court poet Salomon Franck) is based on the Gospel reading (John 16: 16-23). This saying of Jesus is particularly well-suited to Lutheran dogma, and is central to a great number of Bach cantatas: namely, Jesus predicts his death but also prophesizes his resurrection; sorrow is turned to joy, just as a woman suffers in childbirth. In sum, the suffering is, to some degree, necessary to achieve the ultimate joy.

With this ultimate aim in mind, Bach is hardly sparing in his musical depiction of sorrow; indeed he may well have sensed that there is a certain pleasure in tragic, anguished music. In other words, music, more than any other art, is capable of creating sorrow and joy together, showing precisely the sort of alchemy to which Christ alluded in one instant. Indeed, so effective is the first chorus in its tragic effect, that Bach reused much of this music for the “*Crucifixus*,” the central, and crucial portion of the *Credo* in his *Mass in B Minor*. The ensuing recitative prolongs the same affect in a particularly emotional setting for alto. However the rising C major scale in the first violin (although the piece as a whole is firmly in the minor mode) may well allude to the ultimate joy in the Kingdom of God, entered as it is with so much sorrow. The three successive arias give varying accounts of the sorrow-joy antithesis; the last aria affirms that all pain will only be small (“*ein Kleines*”), something which is perhaps musically portrayed by the use of the minor mode, but with a relatively unemotional *ostinato* theme and also by the *obligato* chorale (“*Jesu, meine Freude*”), a well-known hymn (with a melody in the minor mode), which centers on the ultimate joy in Christ. Most joyful perhaps is the central bass aria where the blatant imitation between the two violins and continuo alludes to the believer's intent to follow Christ; this theme conveniently connects with the opening gesture of the final, triumphant chorale.

Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland, BWV 61
Cantata for Advent I

This cantata, for Advent 1714, uses another text by Erdmann Neumeister, which begins with Luther's famous Advent choral (a German version of the Latin hymn “*Veni redemptor*”). The Gospel concerns Christ's entry into Jerusalem, and Neumeister's text is a general exposition on the implications and various forms of Christ's coming: the blessing and light of his earthly appearance; his entry into the institution of the church and his blessing of doctrine

and sacrament; and, finally, his entry into the heart of the individual believer. Bach's choice of the French Overture for the opening chorale setting is particularly interesting: first, it develops Neumeister's general intention to use the best of secular musical forms to expand the expressive range of church music; secondly, the regal connotations of the French court can be grafted onto the coming of Christ the King; and, most important of all, the overture is a symbol of beginning (i.e. of an opera or ballet), which, in this case, not only portrays the coming of Christ, but also functions as the opening of the Church year.

Gleichwie der Regen und Schnee vom Himmel fällt BWV 18

Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass, 4 Violas, Bassoon, Basso
Continuo

1 1. SINFONIA (4 Violas, Bassoon, Continuo)

2 2. RECITATIVE (Bass, Bassoon, Continuo)

Gleichwie der Regen und Schnee von Himmel fällt und nicht wieder dahin kommet, sondern feuchtet die Erde und macht sie fruchtbar und wachsend, daß sie gibt Samen zu säen und Brot zu essen: also soll das Wort, so aus meinem Munde gehet, auch sein; es soll nicht wieder zu mir leer kommen, sondern tun, das mir gefället, und soll ihm gelingen, dazu ich's sende.

Just as the rain and snow fall from heaven and do not return, but give the earth moisture and make it fertile and fruitful, so that it gives seed for sowing and bread for eating: just so shall the word be, proceeding from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but shall do what pleases me and shall accomplish for which I send it.

3 3. RECITATIVE (Tenor, Bass, 4 Violas, Continuo) and LITANY (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass, 4 Violas, Bassoon, Continuo)

*Mein Gott, hier wird mein Herze sein:
Ich öffne dir's in meines Jesu Namen;
So streue deinen Samen
Als in ein gutes Land hinein.
Mein Gott, hier wird mein Herze sein:
Laß solches Frucht, und hundertfältig, bringen.
O Herr, Herr, hilf! o Herr laß wohl gelingen!*

My God, here is my heart: I open it to you in my Jesus' name; so scatter your seed in it as if on good land. My God, here is my heart, let it bring forth its harvest, and in hundredfold. O Lord, Lord, help! O Lord, let it prosper!

*Du wollest deinen Geist und Kraft zum Worte geben.
Erhör uns, lieber Herre Gott!*

You wanted to add your spirit and power to the word.
Hear us, dear Lord God!

*Nur wehre, treuer Vater, wehre,
Daß mich und keinen Christen nicht*

The remainder of the cantata is divided into recitatives, arias and a closing setting of a partial verse of the chorale "Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern" (it is extremely rare for Bach to set only a partial verse). The most striking movement is doubtlessly the central recitative for bass, which presents a quotation from Revelation (3: 20): The music depicts the knocking at the door of the resurrected Christ. Although the modulation to the major mode alludes to the joy of dinner with Christ, the drama of the whole is somewhat terrifying, not unlike the close of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*.

*Des Teufels Trug verkehre.
Sein Sinn ist ganz dahin gerich't,
Uns deines Wortes zu berauben
Mit aller Seligkeit.*

But just prevent, dear Father, prevent me and every Christian from being converted by the devil's delusion. His mind has only one intent, to rob us of your word and all the bliss.

*Den Satan unter unsre Füße treten.
Erhör uns, lieber Herre Gott!*

Let Satan be trod down by our feet. Hear us, dear Lord God!

*Ach! viel' verleugnen Wort und Glauben
Und fallen ab wie faules Obst,
Wenn sie Verfolgung sollen leiden.
So stürzen sie in ewig Herzeleid,
Da sie ein zeitlich Weh vermeiden.*

Ah! Many renounce word and faith and fall away like rotten fruit when they must suffer persecution. Thus they are plunged in everlasting grief for having avoided passing woe.

*Und uns für des Türken und des Papsts grausamen Mord
und Lästerungen,
Wüten und Toben väterlich behüten.
Erhör uns, lieber Herre Gott!*

Protect us like a father from the Turk's and the Pope's most cruel murder and blasphemies' anger and fury.
Hear us, dear Lord God!

*Ein andrer sorgt nur für den Bauch;
Inzwischen wird der Seele ganz vergessen;
Der Mammon auch
Hat vieler Herz besessen.
So kann das Wort zu keiner Kraft gelangen.
Und wieviel Seelen hält
Die Wollust nicht gefangen?
So sehr verführet sie die Welt,
Die Welt, die ihnen muß anstatt des Himmels stehen,
Darüber sie vom Himmel irgehen.*

Some care just for their belly: meanwhile their soul is left quite forgotten: and Mammon, too, possessed the hearts of many. Thus the word is left without its power. And how many souls are not captive by the pleasures of flesh? The world seduces them so well, the world, which then must stand for them instead of heaven, so that they from heaven go astray.

*Alle Irrige und Verführte wiederbringen.
Erhör uns, lieber Herre Gott!*

Let us recover all who have gone astray and were seduced. Hear us, dear Lord God!

4 4. ARIA (Soprano, 4 Violas, Continuo)

*Mein Seelenschatz ist Gottes Wort;
Außer dem sind alle Schätze
Solche Netze,
Welche Welt und Satan stricken,
Schnöde Seelen zu berücken.
Fort mit allen, fort, nur fort!
Mein Seelenschatz ist Gottes Wort.*

My soul's treasure is God's word: All other treasures are but mere devices woven by the world and Satan to beguile scornful souls. Away with all of this, away, away! My soul's treasure is God's word.

5 5. CHORALE (Tutti)

*Ich bitt, o Herr, aus Herzens Grund,
Du wollst nicht von mir nehmen
Dein heiliges Wort aus meinem Mund;
So wird mich nicht beschämen
Mein Sünd und Schuld, denn in dein' Huld
Setz ich all mein Vertrauen:
Wer sich nur fest darauf verläßt,
Der wird den Tod nicht schauen.*

I pray, O Lord, with inmost heart, don't take it from me, don't take your holy word from my mouth; Thus my sin and guilt won't confound me, as in your grace I put all my trust; who relies steadfast on this won't behold death.

Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen

BWV 12

Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass, Oboe, Cornetto, Strings,
Bassoon, Basso continuo

6 1. SINFONIA (Oboe, Strings, Bassoon, Continuo)

7 2. CHORUS (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass, Oboe, Strings,
Bassoon, Continuo)

*Weinen, Klagen,
Sorgen, Zagen,
Angst und Not
Sind der Christen Tränenbrot,
Die das Zeichen Jesu tragen.*

Weeping, wailing, grief and fear, dread and need are the Christians' tearful bread, of those who bear the sign of Christ.

8 3. RECITATIVE (Alto, Strings, Bassoon, Continuo)

Wir müssen durch viel Trübsal in das Reich Gottes eingehen.

We must go through great affliction to enter God's kingdom.

9 4. ARIA (Alto, Oboe, Continuo)

*Kreuz und Krone sind verbunden,
Kampf und Kleinod sind vereint.
Christen haben alle Stunden
Ihre Qual und ihren Feind,
Doch ihr Trost sind Christi Wunden.*

Cross and crown are joined together, conflict and gem are combined. Christians must suffer at every hour their torment and their foe, but their comfort are the wounds of Christ.

10 5. ARIA (Bass, 2 Violins, Continuo)

*Ich folge Christo nach,
Von ihm will ich nicht lassen
Im Wohl und Ungemach,
Im Leben und Erblassen.
Ich küsse Christi Schmach,
Ich will sein Kreuz umfassen.
Ich folge Christo nach,
Von ihm will ich nicht lassen.*

I follow Christ, him I will never abandon, in health or in distress, in living or in dying. Christ's disgrace I kiss, his cross I embrace. I follow Christ, him I will never abandon.

11 6. ARIA with instrumental chorale (Tenor, Cornetto,
Continuo)

*Sei getreu, alle Pein
Wird doch nur ein Kleines sein.
Nach dem Regen
Blüht der Segen,
Alles Wetter geht vorbei.
Sei getreu, sei getreu!*

Be steadfast, all the pain will have been but a trifle. After rain the blessing flowers, every tempest has an end. Be steadfast, be steadfast!

12 7. CHORALE (Tutti)

*Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan,
Dabei will ich verbleiben,
Es mag mich auf die rauhe Bahn
Not, Tod und Elend treiben,
So wird Gott mich
Ganz väterlich
In seinen Armen halten,
Drum laß ich ihn nur walten.*

What God does is rightly done, to this I will cleave, when need, death and suffer-ing drive me onto a cruel road God will hold me like a father in his arms: so I yield him all power.

**Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland
BWV 61**

Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass, Bassoon, Strings, Basso continuo

13 1. OUVERTURE [Chorus] (Tutti)

*Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland,
Der Jungfrauen Kind erkannt,
Des sich wundert alle Welt:
Gott solch Geburt ihm bestellt.*

Now come, the gentiles' Savior, as the Virgin's child revealed, at whom marvels all the world: that God ordained him such a birth.

14 2. RECITATIVE (Tenor, Continuo)

*Der Heiland ist gekommen,
Hat unser armes Fleisch und Blut
An sich genommen
Und nimmet uns zu Blutsverwandten an.
O allerhöchstes Gut,
Was hast du nicht an uns getan?
Was tust du nicht
Noch täglich an den Deinen?
Du kommst und läßt dein Licht
Mit vollem Segen scheinen.*

The Savior came to us, he took our feeble flesh and blood and took us as kinsmen of his blood. O highest treasure what did you not do for us? What don't you do daily for your people? You come and let your light shine with the richest blessing.

THE INSTRUMENTS

ARCHLUTE - Reid Galbraith; after J. C. Hoffmann, circa 1714.

BASSOON - Peter de Koningh, The Netherlands, 1989; copy of Preudent, Paris, 1740.

OBOE - H. A. Vas Dias, Georgia, USA; after Thomas Stanesby, Sr., London, circa 1700.

ORGAN - Jürgen Ahrend, Germany, 1975.

15 3. ARIA (Tenor, Strings, Continuo)

*Komm, Jesu, komm zu deiner Kirche
Und gib ein selig neues Jahr.
Befördre deines Namens Ehre,
Erhalte die gesunde Lehre
Und segne Kanzel und Altar.*

Come, Jesus, come to your church and fill with blessing the new year! Advance your name in honor, uphold your wholesome doctrine and bless the pulpit and the altar.

16 4. RECITATIVE (Bass, Strings, Continuo)

*Siehe, ich stehe vor der Tür und klopfe an. So jemand meine
Stimme hören wird und die Tür auf tun, zu dem werde ich
eingehen und das Abendmahl mit ihm halten und er mit mir.*

See, I stand before the door and knock on it. If anyone will hear my voice and open the door, I will come into his place and take with him the evening supper, and he with me.

17 5. ARIA (Soprano, Continuo)

*Öffne dich, mein ganzes Herze,
Jesus kömmt und ziehet ein.
Bin ich gleich nur Staub und Erde,
Will er mich doch nicht verschmäh'n,
Seine Lust an mir zu sehn,
Daß ich seine Wohnung werde,
O wie selig werd' ich sein!*

Open wide, all my heart, Jesus comes to live within. Though I am only earth and ashes, He won't disdain me. He will find his joy in me when I become his dwelling, O, how blessed I shall be!

18 6. CHORALE (Tutti)

*Amen, Amen.
Komm, du schöne Freudenkrone, komm und bleib nicht lange!
Deiner wart' ich mit Verlangen.*

Amen, amen! Come, you lovely crown of gladness, do not tarry! I wait for you with longing.

VIOLA - Ægidius Kloz, Mitten-wald, Germany, 1790. Otto Erdesz, New York, USA, 1963; after G.B. Maggini, Brescia. Anonymous; copy of Mathias Eberl, Salzburg, 1696. Coutureaux, Paris, circa 1800.

VIOLIN - Johann Gottlob Pfretzsehner, 1791. Rowland Ross, England, 1989; after Amati. Johann Georg Thir, Vienna, 1754.

VIOLONCELLO - Vincenzo Panormo, Sicily, circa 1780.

VIOLONE - John Pringle, North Carolina, USA, 1992; after Ernst Busch, Nürnberg, circa 1640.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES ARE AVAILABLE ONLINE AT:

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